

Rule 53. Regulation of Conduct in the Courtroom

(a) Persons admitted to hearings.

(1) Generally. Pursuant to D.C. Code § 16-2316(e), the general public shall be excluded from judicial hearings concerning juvenile delinquency or persons in need of supervision. However, a person having a proper interest in a particular case or in the work of the Family Court may be admitted upon preliminary approval of the Presiding Judge of the Family Court and final approval of the judicial officer before whom the hearing is scheduled. Such a person shall apply for permission to attend a hearing or series of hearings by stating in writing the person's name, address and telephone number, business or professional affiliation, reason for wishing to attend, and that the person will refrain from divulging information identifying the respondent or members of the respondent's family or any other child involved in the proceedings. The required information shall be furnished in duplicate on a form supplied by the Family Court, which the applicant shall personally sign. When initialled by the Presiding Judge of the Family Court and signed by the judicial officer before whom the case is scheduled, the original application shall be kept on file by the Family Court, and the copy shall be carried with the applicant at all times during attendance at Family Court hearings.

(2) Persons who need not apply for admission. The following persons shall be deemed to have a proper interest in the work of the Family Court and need not apply for admission under subparagraph (a)(1) of this Rule in order to be admitted to Family Court hearings, but (a) shall nonetheless be required to refrain from divulging information identifying the respondent or members of the respondent's family or any other child involved in the proceedings, and (b) may be excluded by the judicial officer presiding over the proceeding:

(A) Any member of the Bar of the District of Columbia or law student admitted to the limited practice of law under SCR-General Family M;

(B) Authorized personnel of the District of Columbia Superior Court and the District of Columbia Department of Human Services, and other personnel of the Superior Court and the Department of Human Services when engaged in the delivery of court documents;

(C) Members of the respondent's family;

(D) Subject to the rule on witnesses, the victim, the immediate family members, and custodians of the victim shall have a right to attend transfer, fact-finding, disposition and post-disposition hearings, and shall have a right to be present during the victim's testimony. Those admitted under this subsection shall be advised of their obligation to refrain from divulging information identifying the respondent or members of the respondent's family or any other child involved in the proceedings; and

(E) Subject to the rule on witnesses, eyewitnesses, the immediate family members, and custodians of eyewitnesses shall have a right to attend transfer, fact-finding, disposition and post-disposition hearings, and shall have a right to be present during the eyewitness' testimony. Those admitted under this subsection shall be advised of their obligation to refrain from divulging information identifying the respondent or members of the respondent's family or any other child involved in the proceedings.

(3) Persons deemed admissible upon application. The following persons shall be deemed to have a proper interest in the work of the Family Court, and shall be admissible to Family Court hearings after filling out an application pursuant to subparagraph (a)(1) of this Rule:

(A) Any authorized representative of the news media; and

(B) Any attorney not a member of the Bar of the District of Columbia.

(4) Other persons. Eligibility of other persons for admission shall be governed by the provisions of subparagraph (a)(1) of this Rule.

(b) Taking photographs and radio and television broadcasting.

(1) Taking photographs, radio and television broadcasting prohibited. The taking of photographs, or radio or television broadcasting will not be permitted in any of the courtrooms of the Family Court during the progress of judicial proceedings, or in any of the anterooms adjacent thereto, in the detention rooms, in the lobby, or in the corridors of the court house occupied by the Family Court.

(2) Limited permission to take photographs. The taking of photographs in any office or other room of the Family Court shall be only with the knowledge and consent of the official or person in charge of such office or room and of the person or persons photographed.

COMMENT

"Immediate family member" is defined in D.C. Code § 16-2301(42); and "Custodian" is defined in D.C. Code § 16-2301(12).